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FREE THOUGHT

IN

RELIGION:

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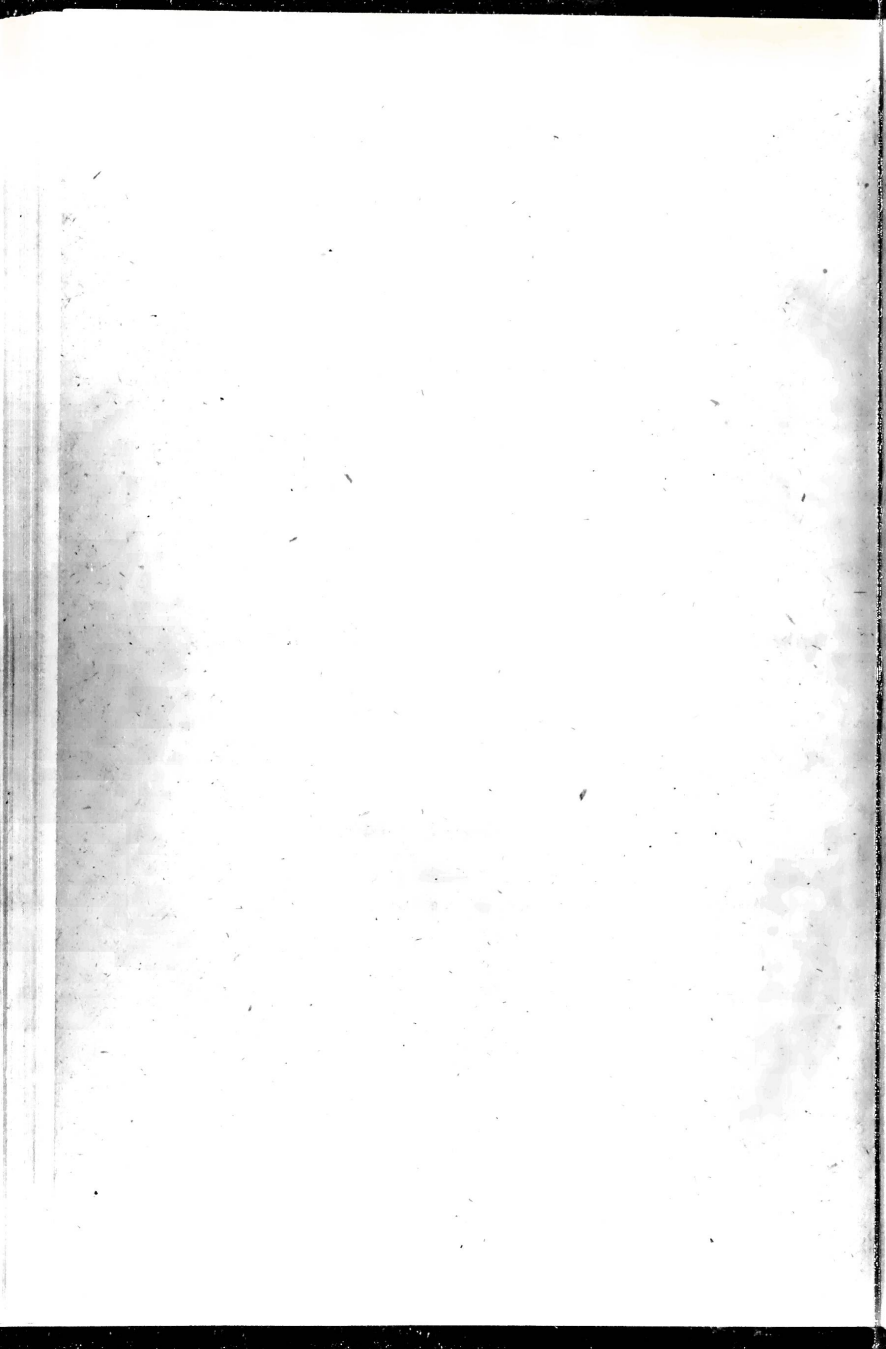
Delivered at GEORGE'S MEETING, EXETER,
March 1st, 1875,

BY ROBERT RODOLPH SUFFIELD,

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Apostolic Missionary and Prefect of the "Guard of Honour."

DEVON WEEKLY TIMES," EXETER.

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THE REV. RODOLPH SUFFIELD ON

“FREE THOUGHT IN RELIGION.”

The Rev. Rodolph Suffield, now Unitarian Minister at Croydon, but formerly a Roman Catholic Priest, paid a visit to Exeter in the latter part of February. His transition from the oldest form of orthodoxy to the newest phase of free thought in religion was in itself a circumstance sufficient to create much interest in him ; and the announcement that he was to preach at George's Chapel, therefore, attracted large congregations. Those who heard the reverend gentleman were much struck by his eloquence and power of argument. On the following Monday evening (March 1st) a social gathering was held in the schoolroom, for the purpose of giving the members of the congregation an opportunity of making a more intimate acquaintance with their visitor. Lady Bowring, whose guest Mr. Suffield was during his stay in Exeter, was among those present. At half-past seven the company adjourned to the chapel, for the purpose of listening to an address from the reverend gentleman. The chair was taken by Mr. Henry Norrington, J.P., and among those present were the Rev. Rodolph Suffield, Rev. T. W. Chignell (minister at George's Chapel), Mr. W. Mortimer, J.P., Mr. Mears, &c. The chapel was well filled.

Mr. SUFFIELD, who on rising was very warmly received, said it had been a great pleasure to him to visit this ancient city. He had visited it on former occasions, and examined some of the antiquities in the neighbourhood. He now visited Exeter under other circumstances, and found himself amongst a band of sincere and ardent men and women, who were not exactly, perhaps, disciples of antiquity. They were the disciples rather of progress than of antiquity, and yet he thought he might claim for them that they were also disciples of antiquity in the one high, great, and true sense. (Hear.) But of that presently. Let him first thank them for their personal kindness. Perhaps he might also be permitted to pay a passing tribute of affectionate reverence, which seemed trebly due, in

coming to Exeter, to the memory of his and their honoured friend, Sir John Bowring. (Cheers.) It was with almost pathetic interest that he found himself the guest of his widow at a time when he came to visit the place where Sir John last resided. He remembered that the very last communication he had from him was written from Exeter, and sadly it was that he went to fill up the gap left void by his death—if anyone could be supposed to fill it up—at a place where they were ardently longing to see him, but were disappointed, the hand of Divine Providence having directed him to another and an unknown land. Thus in different ways he felt as if there was to him a kind of pathetic interest in thus being interwoven with them, and with his memory, and the memory of the intercourse with those whom he left behind. But to pass from subjects of a personal character, he asked himself what exactly it was which he ought to say on an occasion when nothing very express had been laid out. It seemed a kind of presumption, especially after having addressed them in the ordinary sacred services of religion, again to address them upon those subjects unless he had been somewhat directly asked to do so. He hoped, however, that they would regard any words which he might utter as simply the expression of thoughts, not indeed in any way prepared, except in so far that they had been the result of very strong, deep, and long-continued previous thoughts, though not directly with a view to that evening. Perhaps he should best carry out their wishes by answering a question which was very often put to persons in their position. When anyone heard discourses such as frequently might be heard in the places of worship belonging to Religious Free Thought, persons accustomed to the Orthodox views frequently would observe :—“You obviously don't believe in the miraculous authority of any Church, of any book, or of any man. Considering what you have rejected, tell us what remains.” He certainly felt additional diffidence in even attempting to propound an answer, however imperfect, to that question ; for there was a voice much more familiar to them than his, which was continually addressing them in that place. When they had in the midst of them a man of the richest culture and deepest thought, and the most ardent devotion to a great cause, they hardly needed the voice of any stranger, and in fact any other voice must be feeble in comparison with that. It was a proud thing for Exeter that they possessed in the midst of them a man like Mr. Chignell—(cheers)—and it would be a proud thing for the assemblies of Religious Free Thought in London if they were able to number him amongst their ranks. (Hear, hear.) Thus, he could only say from his own line of thought and stand-point

something of the kind of reply that occurred to his own mind. Doubtless the subject was one of stupendous importance. They stood amidst the remnants of magnificent systems. He could hardly conceive any man of thought, deep feeling, and high culture, who could possibly look without emotion on the great Churches surrounding them. There was the venerable Church of Rome, with its stately history, its gorgeous traditions, its rich fund of sanctity, its realms of poetry and beauty, and with everything almost that could mark what was past in stately grandeur, and in so much of grace and excellence the perfectness of the spiritual life. He should be sorry indeed to fling a stone of scorn at the Roman Catholic Church, so venerable in its august traditions, so vast in its former influence upon the world, frequently for good. Again, there was the illustrious Church of England, interwoven with the religious liberties of the nation, and with her highest culture. There was hardly a single epoch of modern English history, there was hardly an illustrious name, but what was in some way interwoven either with the Protestant Church of England or with those illustrious Nonconformist bodies (he spoke of the Orthodox Nonconformist bodies) which had been the bulwarks of religion, and to a great degree of religious free thought, at least in the seeds they had been sowing. (Applause.) Indeed, that man must be indifferent to whatever was grand in human thought and history who could not look with respect, nay affection, upon each one in succession of these grand organisations. He confessed that to his own mind the sensation of scorn or hatred seemed simply an impossibility. (Cheers.) Each one of these great organisations seemed to him to represent something which the human mind had coveted, some great principle which the human heart had had to uphold. (Cheers.) Then what was the fatal flaw belonging to them all? It was simply this, that they rested on a foundation of mist; they were beautiful edifices, built on a golden cloud, and the only question was whether, having discovered this, they were to carry on the illusion simply because they thought it might do good, or whether, trusting to God, and to Divine truth, they were distinctly to say, "These things are not true." There was in them much of beauty and grandeur; they had done much in their day; but all such things might have been said of Paganism, and yet it rested on a mist. Paganism was a grand religion, parent of almost everything that was glorious in poetry and in art. Everything of the majestic in human history was to be found in Greek Paganism. They wandered amid the relics of its grandeur, and they felt as if they could almost bow down and worship before those magnificent creations of the human intellect, some of them almost bordering on the Divine. And

yet it was not right to maintain that stately old Paganism, when it was found out that it rested on what was not true. (Hear, hear.) And so with other systems since. Then, again, it could not be right to say, "Such a system is very vast; and on account of the hold it possesses over so many millions of people, therefore you ought not in any way to point out the error; rather you ought to submit to it, and accept it as true for the sake of the millions who hold to it." He need not remind them that there was a religion, most ancient and most vast, which embraced a third of the human race; more ancient than the most ancient forms of Christianity—a religion before whose august traditions and organizations much in Christendom must pale away into insignificance—the vast and wonderful religion of Buddha. That religion sprang from, and was itself a reform of, another religion still more ancient, viz., the Brahminical religion, with its Incarnate Deities. That carried them back to a period when they were absolutely lost in the very depths of a history so ancient, so vast that they could hardly fathom it at all. Were they to submit to this, if they lived in the East, because it had done so much good and contained so many beautiful things, as the Buddhist religion undoubtedly did? The great precepts of Charity, which formed the glory of Christianity, would be found—and no man knew it better than their venerable friend, Sir John Bowring—existing in the most perfect beauty in the sacred books of Buddha. The most delicate exercises of the precepts of Charity were therein pointed out; even that exercise of Charity which consisted in erecting fountains, not merely for man, but for the beasts of the field, so that it was even said, if you would be the favoured child of the Most Holy One, erect watering troughs in the most sequestered roads, where the traveller's horse may be satiated in the midst of the burning heat, and no one shall know whence the mercy to that beast has come. Surely a religion which was able to utter such precepts as that ages before the dawn of Christianity, was not a religion that could be treated as if it were nothing. (Hear, hear.) They could not, however, admit for a moment the principle that a religion was to be treated as true, simply because it contained beautiful, true, sublime, and spiritual precepts. The fact was, there was no religion in the world which did not contain that which was of the essence of religion. Then, were they to accept the particular form of error of the country in which they were born—Buddhism and Brahminism in Hindustan, Roman Catholicism in Italy, Protestantism in England, and the religion of Mahomet in Turkey—upon the ground that they all accepted and taught the fundamental principles of all religion? The

reply to that was that religion was one thing and morality another. There was one great principle of morality entirely essential for human life and the formation of character, viz., the principle of individual truthfulness. It was not possible for any man of ordinary intelligence and diffidence to say that he had got the truth and all who disagreed with him were wrong. All he could say was that such and such were his convictions of the truth, and of course he should change them if he saw reasons for doing so. They might differ in their convictions, but they would all agree that each man must be true to his own convictions. This was the fatal obstacle which stood in the way of any person professing to conform to any of the Orthodox religions. He could not do so and at the same time observe perfect and entire truthfulness—he was obliged to keep something back. For instance, a clergyman who had studied the works of that great geologist, who on Saturday was interred in Westminster Abbey, or had studied something of geology for himself, knew that the world had been in existence for ages, and that the Creation was not sudden, but a gradual and continual evolution. Yet he had to say every Sunday that God created the earth and the heavens in six days and rested on the seventh, which was in dead contradiction to everything taught by the Revelation of the Rocks. Every person who read that commandment about the Sabbath day had to deny distinctly the Revelation of God, contained, not in one single book, but in every rock. A schoolboy, if he had the moral courage, might stand up and say, "If you please, reverend sir, that is not true—God did no such thing, and I know better." (Hear.) It struck him that for a person to be in the position that he had to be the docile recipient of a single untruth which he knew to be untrue, was absolutely bad for the moral character. (Hear.) Of course, there were many persons who did not know these things to be untrue, and then it was all right. If a person really believed a thing, however untrue in fact it might be, there was no lowering of the moral character. What he protested was this—that as soon as ever a person recognised that there was that in Orthodoxy which was not true, he could not profess to recognise it as true without a distinct lowering of the moral character. That was the cause of their position. That was the cause of their uniting together and saying—We will be quite free; we will place ourselves in the hands of Divine Providence; we will not fetter ourselves or our minister in any manner; whatever science teaches, let it teach, let history unravel what it may. Whatever there is grand and beautiful in any religion, tell us all—it does not belong to that religion, it belongs to humanity and God; and that is the reason we can

speak well of the Roman Catholic, the Mahomedan, the Brahmin, the Buddhist, the Anglican, and the Wesleyan Churches. Excuse the putting of these together; some were very great and some very small, some very new and some very ancient, but they all represented different phases of humanity; and those who were in the position of Religious Free Thought could say, "You are all our brothers and sisters, for you all make a portion of that great humanity to which we ourselves belong." (Hear, hear.) He hoped that if there were any Orthodox friends present, they would do him the kindness to understand that while he was bound to say out what he thought, he did not mean it as the expression of contempt in any shape or form. That he said with perfect sincerity; and, having said that, they would kindly permit him to speak as things occurred to his own mind, because, if one spoke under the perpetual feeling that he might give persons pain, one could not say out what he thought. (Hear, hear.) They would perceive, then, that the position he took was that all the different religions were untrue, being all without exception interwoven with superstition. There were legends and incarnations in most of them. The Pagan gods had children by human mothers; and hundreds of years before Christ there was the Indian legend of Chrisna, born of a virgin, with God as his father, who had to fly to a foreign country, was reared among peasants, and was worshipped by shepherds. The legends were very similar in the different religions. There were miracles, too, in all of them; equally false and equally true. There were miracles going on now just as in former times, and he could quite understand how they grew up without any intention to deceive on the part of those who promulgated them. These legends and miracles were all based upon truth; they were simply exaggerations. Human credulity had coloured little incidents of truth, and had kept looking at them until they were magnified and multiplied immensely. The difficulty of getting at human evidence was extraordinary, as was exemplified in the late Tichborne trial—if they would pardon the allusion. Take any miracle, or any statement of any religion in the world, and let an English jury and counsel sit upon it, and where would it be? He (Mr. Suffield) felt that in rejecting one mythological system, he rejected them all. It was with great pain and regret that he did so, but he could not place himself in the position of rejecting one system, with which he was interwoven by many tender and reverent memories, and which had given him no cause to sever himself from it, except the one great fact, that he was profoundly convinced it was not true—he felt it impossible that he could reject one mythological system, and

then embrace another and fancy it true. He felt himself amid the ruins of many stately, poetic, and beautiful mythologies, relics of an age that had passed away, and the question he had to put to himself was this—"If I rise out of this, what will be my spiritual position? On what can I form my life? What can I present to others as the mode of forming their lives?" Here he might say—and he had never mentioned it in public before—that when he was on the point of leaving the Roman Catholic Church, a deeply loved and honoured friend, with whom he had spent years of intimate and tender friendship, wrote to him and signified that he and some others had determined to present him with an income of above £200 a year, to enable him to retire into literary ease, without doing anything contrary to his conscience, and be thus free from anxiety and care. It was done in a way which signified every gentle and tender feeling; but he felt bound to decline the offer. He knew the alternative which presented itself, but he determined that if he left the Roman Catholic Church, though he had no intention of attacking it, he would publicly maintain the position which he deemed to be the right and truthful position for every human being; and he could not do so if he accepted that offer. (Hear, hear.) Thus they perceived that what he was saying represented something which had been deeply and profoundly before his own mind. "Then," he asked himself, "What is the position before me?" and the answer was simply this: "I fall back upon the intuitions of my own soul, and upon my own reason as the guide presiding over those intuitions." Would they bear with him while he explained a little more fully what he meant? What was it which a person, any person whatever, instantly appealed to when called upon to any action? Suppose they belonged to any of the Churches of Christendom, and suppose some temptation suddenly presented itself to them. He would suppose it was a temptation to commit a fraud—a fraud upon a benefactor. What was it that immediately made a man say, "No, I will not do that?" Was it the teaching of any creed? Was it a precept contained in any sacred book? No. Before they had thought of any written precept, or remembered the utterance of any Church, there was that inner voice, that sense of right and wrong, which instantly made a man say to himself, if he was good or wishing to be good, "I will not do it—I cannot do it—it is not right." Now, it was a platitude of platitudes to say that; and yet it was the most important principle of their philosophy to point it out, because what he affirmed was this—that if in the great incidents of human life, just the very occurrences when they needed a guide, if then

the guide they went to was within them, then was it not true that in reality nothing higher was needed? And then a person might say, "Ah, that is very true, but we meet it by this objection. There would be many cases in which you would not know how to act; and therefore you must go to the Bible to learn how to act." His reply to that was that the person who took the Bible as his infallible guide—if he was what they called a common-sense person, leading an ordinary life of goodness and common-sense—that person invariably interpreted the Bible by the principle of conscience. For instance, they knew the beautiful Sermon on the Mount. Suppose a clergyman had solemnly read in Church the words about giving the coat to him who would take the cloak. Suppose you went out of doors after hearing this solemnly read; and suppose a beggar came up and asked for something. You were a very orthodox lady perhaps; but you would immediately say, "I don't give to beggars in the street." (Laughter.) "But," says the beggar, "please, your ladyship, it says in the Gospel that you are to give to whoever asks;" and then he asks a gentleman standing by for his coat, and he gets it, and the coat too. Immediately the man pawns the things, and spends the money in making himself drunk. They would say immediately, "That isn't rational, it isn't right." How did they know it was not rational? The voice within said so. And every rational person, leading any ordinary life, when he took the Bible as his infallible guide, was invariably guided by this higher principle within—the principle of conscience. (Hear.) Then, he held that there was a moral guide within man, and that was the first and most important principle. He was perfectly aware that he should be met by the observation again and again, "But this varies—there are a great number of different views regarding it." So there were. Amongst people who took infallible authorities there were a great many different views; but the essential principles of right were the same. What he claimed was that every man had this gift of discerning right from wrong within him. There might be distorted cases, just as there were persons born without eyes or nose; or a man might possibly destroy the gift, as he might poke out his eyes. But still the fact remained, that, ordinarily speaking, every person had within him the sense of right and wrong. They hardly ever found it get out of the character. He had intimately known prisoners of all sorts, some of them belonging to the most degraded criminal classes, and he must say he could not call to mind one single instance of any human being having totally lost all moral sense. He had known persons in a sophistical state of mind who had argued against

what he said, but as soon as they were not arguing they had got it like other people. (A laugh.) He had not known one single instance of a human being who had not within him that sense of what they called right and wrong, a sense of duty to be done ; and duty implied duty to Someone—it was duty to a Mind that was above man. That, he held, was universal, and the few exceptions only proved the universality of the rule. Thus they had got in that principle of right and wrong, everything that was needed for the practical purposes of life, if the principle were developed and not crushed. Roman Catholic friends would pardon his remarking that one of the most fatal things in their Church was the tendency, which had been growing upon it in late years, to crush the sense of the individual conscience before the will of another man. That was a very perilous experiment. (Hear.) What he said, therefore, was this—that there exists in every human being the sense of right and wrong ; that thus they had a practical guide for all the purposes of life, and that thus they had the means presented them of considering how to live themselves and of teaching others how to live. Let them apply the test of the bringing up of children, which was the great test of whether or no any religious or moral system was correct. Now what was the highest mode of bringing up a child ? Surely it was not that which would crush his intelligence, his sense of right and wrong, and train it all into the practice of one single feature, which might be a virtue and often might not be—simple submission to another person, or submission to a dead book. Orthodox Protestants had no right to triumph over Roman Catholics for their belief in the Pope's infallibility ; because he must be allowed to say that, between the two infallibilities, he hardly knew which was the more absurd. The religious Rationalist, in bringing up his children, assumed that there existed within them the sense of right and wrong and the principle of reason. He did not crush these, but developed them, instructing them with the knowledge he had himself received, so that the child of the nineteenth century was born and brought forward into the world with the advantages of all the ages that had preceded him. He could conceive of nothing so cruel as a religious free thinker, a Unitarian, allowing his children to grow up anyhow, so that they might be utterly uninfluenced in their choice. The principle of conscience compelled him to give to his child the highest advantages, the highest stand-point, which he had painfully conquered for himself. (Hear, hear.) He would present to his child the highest experience of the moral conscience around him ; he would train the child so that he would grow up with a

strong sense of the duty he owed to the Universe of which he was a part. That was something they could teach to the youngest child. He took this line of putting it, because it tested at once whether it was the true position or not. Take the youngest child, then ; and how easy it was for them to present to him the idea of God ! Ah, far easier than for any person fettered by the Churches. What a dismal, painful, and difficult thing it was for them to have to teach a child about the Orthodox God. The Orthodox person had to tell his child that there was a time when the God of the Universe could sit at supper and eat with Abraham and his wife ; that He could ask Abraham's opinion as to what He should do with the cities of the Plain, and then, not satisfied with Abraham's judgment in the matter, could send out two angels to examine the place and sit down to supper until they returned. How could they consistently make children reverent about the great God of the Universe when they had to make them understand this was He ? Then the Orthodox parent had to teach his child the doctrine of the Trinity, and to assure him that if he did not believe that entirely he would be consigned to everlasting fire, and that he would find the greatest portion of the world there. And yet the God who did this was a Being full of benevolence and love, and the child must love him with all his heart and soul. What a monstrous collection of contradictions ! The Orthodox parent had also to teach his child to believe in a Saviour. " A Saviour ! to save me from what ? " the child would naturally ask. " Oh, to save you from God, to save you from your Heavenly Father ! " The Free Thinker had risen to a higher platform than that. He said, " I don't want a Saviour to save me from God. God is my Saviour. God is my everlasting refuge, my everlasting hope. I want no Saviour to save me out of the hands of the omnipotent, eternal, and all-beautiful God. " Then, having dismissed these mythological fables, how easy his task was. If the child asked any question about God—what He is like, where He is—he at once said : " I don't know, I can't explain anything. I don't understand it at all. I cannot tell you what that is within you which thinks and feels, and which you call mind. I cannot even tell you what my own mind is—I don't know its essence, or its form ; I don't know where it is, whether diffused over my body or dwelling in a particular place. I don't know anything at all about it. I simply know there is something called the mind, something which makes the ' I,' something which is subject to all these thoughts and feelings and emotions, and I call it my soul. My child (he would say), the great Universe is not dead ; the great and beautiful Universe, it also has a Soul. You are not superior to the Universe. You have a soul

capable of emotion ; the little body of yours is tenanted by that soul. This glorious and magnificent universe, too, this also has a Soul. Such as your soul is to your body, such is the Soul of the great and wonderful Universe to the Universe itself. The Soul of the Universe, my child, we call it 'God,'—the beautiful, the all-good, the all-just, the all-wonderful God. More than that, my child, I cannot tell you. But I can tell you, He is good, because you feel, and know yourself, that it is not badness and folly that are ruling this world. That Soul of the world, which we call God, you feel and know He must be wisdom and goodness." He ventured to say that everybody present was convinced that any child in the world, addressed in such words, had that within him whereby he would be able to recognise this truth from his earliest age ; and the recognition would intensify more and more the longer he lived. Their religion, then, was very simple. He would ask them to bear with him a moment. There was one other great truth which he should be sorry to have forgotten. He must confess that if he stopped where he had just brought them, the world would still be a dismal world. The most dismal of all dismal things would be the state of a man in this Universe without the sense of God. That would be terrible and sad indeed. It would seem to him as if the whole world were like a lonesome desert. Having presented to the mind of the child this first great thought—God, the Soul of the Universe, they then had to teach him that there was a relationship between that Soul of the Universe and the soul of man. And this could be taught without the assistance of the Churches and Scriptures. It could be taught by the aid of the book which God himself had planted in the soul. He did not believe the soul was created corrupt and loathsome, and he did not believe any Orthodox parent believed it in his heart. What was it that made life beautiful but sympathy between soul and soul—that consciousness of the reciprocation of sympathy which they called the communion of souls ? This was one of the glories, one of the beauties, of Humanity. It could not be taken away—it was engrafted in the great heart of mankind. As soon as a child recognised that, he recognised also that there must be a communion between the great Soul of the Universe and the souls of men. Was that great Soul, which had flung itself forth into all the forms of beauty, gentleness, majesty, and tenderness—was that Soul alone without human sympathy ? Was that Soul alone incapable of communion ? They had to annihilate their very nature before they could think it. (Applause.) Thus the next religious lesson was this. They easily pointed out to a child, not by complicated texts, but by appealing to that which

was purest and best within him—that there must be communion between his soul and God, because it was exactly that which was the beauty and life of all souls everywhere ; and what the child felt towards any good man, what they felt towards one another, that in an infinite extent the great Mind of the Universe must feel towards them. (Applause.) He had said thus much in order to show the simplicity and solidity of their religious position. The Orthodox might urge that it was insecure, inasmuch as it rested, after all, upon the intuitions of the individual. But what did anything in orthodox religion rest upon, in the case of an intelligent person who had thought out his religion for himself ? He was not so presumptuous as to suppose that no intelligent man would reason himself into a belief in one of the Orthodox religions. Having done so, he said, “ I have a solid rock ; you have not. You rest upon conscience and intelligence, but I rest upon the infallible authority of my Bible or my Church.” After all, that was an error ; because his infallibility rested purely and simply upon a whole collection of arguments. And here was the marvellous power of their position, not as a controversial position, which he cared nothing for, but its marvellous power for the future of the human race. The intelligent and thoughtful Orthodox person rested his whole spiritual life on a collection of the most complicated arguments—he ought to go through centuries of history and examine the original Hebrew and Greek scriptures, though unfortunately there were no originals. The Orthodox parent ought to go into all this, and then launch his child forth into life, fortified with the complication of proofs. That was why Orthodox people were so anxious about dogmatic education, and so afraid of science. Strong as the Orthodox imagined his position to be, he was always in danger of finding an additional argument which would undermine the fabric, and then the whole thing passed away, carrying with it the whole moral and spiritual life, unless, indeed, it had been built up on other principles after all. He wished he could make them realise the intense importance of this, and the miserable and terrible risk there was in trusting the whole moral and spiritual life to an infallibility resting upon such a complication of proofs. He would frankly tell them one of the reasons why, though so outspoken to them, he felt cautious regarding what was called shaking the opinions of Orthodox persons—it was his knowledge how tremendous was the danger on account of the fatal error of Orthodox education. Therefore they saw what a vast advantage they possessed, who, in the place of resting their religion and morality upon complicated systems, were able to take simply what came from God—Humanity, the Bible of God

within and around them. (Hear, hear.) He had now almost come to a close. He thanked them for the kindness with which they had listened to what he felt were only the veriest platitudes, but platitudes on which the whole of the human life rested. It might, however, do some good to hear those platitudes from other lips than those to which they had been accustomed ; for it was some testimony, at least, of the belief of another mind in the vastly important position they maintained. He must confess he did believe their position to be one of vast importance. He looked with fear and trembling upon the future of a country without religion, without the thought of God, without trust, without hope in God. Such was the future which Orthodoxy was preparing for them. He was intimate with some persons in political life, defenders of the Established Church, regular attendants at the services of that Church ; and he found amongst them an entire shaking of all religious belief. Since these persons had become cognisant of the progress of the truths of Science, he had noticed that whenever they were in circumstances in which they thought they could speak openly, they admitted that it was utterly impossible to recognise as true any of the dogmas of Orthodox Christianity. And yet such persons were frequenters of the Church of England, and when residing in the country built churches and attended Sacrament regularly. He knew many such persons. They had entirely lost all sense of belief in God. Everything had passed away. Not only had they lost their belief in God, but what, if he were to make the comparison, was almost worse—their belief in man. The two generally went together. When a man lost his sense of a belief in God, very often there passed away also that beautiful stay of humanity—belief in man. (Hear, hear.) The two were interwoven. It rested with such as those he was addressing to save the future of their country. Orthodoxy could not save it. The old Roman Catholicism could not save it. The days of Roman Catholicism were numbered, though they might be long. It had had a great history, but it must rest on its past. It must either alter effectually, or die like the great religions of old. It would leave behind it a great memory, but, like other great things of old, it must perish. All existing superstitions must pass away. Science was getting stronger than all, and must eventually destroy all mythologies. And then it would be a question whether men and women—earnest, moral, religious, spiritual—should have been the means of keeping alive within the country the beginning of better and higher influences ; whether the religious life, the spiritual life, the sense of conscious communion between the soul and God, the recognition of supreme intelligent law and a supreme Law-

giver, should have been fostered and kept alive among the people. Oh, my friends, (the rev. gentleman exclaimed) it is your great destiny, small in number as you may be, to strive to keep alive these great principles, and foster them for the time to come. It is a noble and a righteous undertaking, as I ventured to say to you yesterday, to rival the faith of the men of old, and to rival it on the principles of intelligence and human conscience. In different places and in different ways may we labour for that great cause. It is surrounded with difficulties, it is surrounded with misjudgment, it is embarrassed with numerous complications, but it is a glorious cause. It is the cause of the progress of human conscience and intelligence, the communion of the soul of man with the Soul of the Universe—a cause boundless as the Universe, a religion of no sect or denomination, but embracing all and everywhere, a religion planted in the soul and planted in the Universe. (Applause.) Such was, I conceive, the idea which animated the heart of the life of Jesus, that noble-hearted son of Joseph and Mary. His lofty spiritual nature, his profoundly religious genius, soaring above the narrow superstitions of His age, and of many ages, beheld a religion varying in form, opinion, and mode, but in its essence as universal as humanity. May we in our several vocations and localities, perchance seldom meeting, combine in sympathy, as we strive during the brief remnant of our life, to build up and to develope that supreme idea. We, like Jesus, would commend our soul to the Supreme Goodness; this present life, and the life beyond the grave, we trust to Him, the Eternal and the Wonderful God!

God—our God—whose works surround us,
 Preaches in the summer wind,
 In the tempest of the ocean,
 In the silence of the mind,
 In the sparkle of the planets,
 In the splendour of the sun,
 In the voice of all creation—
 “God is Love, and God is One.”